MEMORANDUM

submitted to the

Peace Conference

By the National Delegation
of the Eastern Pontus

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By the National Delegation of the Euxine Pontus.

Your Excellency,

While the Peace Conference, pursuing its renovating and humanitarian work, is about to decide the destiny of the oppressed peoples, we, the undersigned, Delegates of the Unredeemed Greeks of the Euxine Pontus, have the honour of calling your attention to the national claims of our country as follows: the constitution of the north of Asia Minor on the southern shores of the Black Sea (the Euxine Pontus) into an independent republic, comprising a part of the ancient Kingdom of Trebizond of the Comnenes, which extends from the Caucasia to the west of Sinope with its hinterland.

Colonized by the Greeks for more than 25 centuries, this country, the majority of the population of which speaks Greek and conserves the Greek habits and traditions, has known the most varied fortunes.

After having formed a part of the Byzantine Empire, towards the beginning of the 13th century, at the time of the taking of Constantinople by the Crusaders, it formed an independent state called *The Empire of Trebizond of the Comnenes*. After the capture of Constantinople by the Turks, Trebizond fell under their power in 1462 and gradually all the country was conquered; since that time it has endured all the evils of a cruel tyranny. In spite of persecutions the autochthonous population continued to lead its national life, always keeping its ethnical conscience intact, always preserving the hope to be able one day to reconquer its liberty, so as to fill that civilizing rôle which had devolved to it in the Near East.

As the Service of Statistics is inexistent in Turkey, it is impossible for us to give any precise evaluation of the total population of the country. Nevertheless, we can affirm without fear of being contradicted, that the majority of this population is Greek both in language and in religion. Between Trebizond and Batoum, one finds the Lazes who are Moslems by religion, but a part of whom also speak Greek as do also the Tonialis (the ancient Thoanes of Xenophon) ; more to the west between Kerassund and Samsoun, live the Sannes or Tsannes. It is to be noticed that even those who are considered as Turks are, for the most part, of Greek origin, having become converted to Islamism after the fall of Trebizond. Amongst them, moreover, are many who are only Moslems in public, such as the Greek-speaking Stavriots who only profess the orthodox faith in private through fear of the Turkish authorities. After the Crimean War, the Treaty of Paris of 1856 and the "*Hatt-i-houmayoun*" had, it is true, granted to "*undeclared*" orthodox Christians, who found themselves in this case, the right to exercise openly the religion of their ancestors, but, as always happens in Turkey, these provisions were never applied.

According to the most recent information received from the different dioceses (in Turkey, the orthodox clergy exercises the functions of civil state officials in all that concerns Christians), the orthodox Greek population can be evaluated at about 700,000 souls, without counting the 350,000 who, fleeing from Turkish persecution, took refuge several years ago in foreign countries: there are about 250,000 in the Caucasia and the remainder are in other countries. All are only awaiting the liberation of their country to return to it.

Besides the populations we have already mentioned, there are also some real Turks and a few thousand Circassians, Armenians, Tartars and Turcomans, but all of these only represent inextricably mixed minorities.

Thanks to its labour, its tenacity, its moral and intellectual superiority, in spite of all the obstacles which the Turks opposed to it, the Greek population has become the most advanced of the whole region, both in civilisation and in

progress. It has thus been able to constitute very prosperous and active communities, with numerous churches, various charitable institutions, schools and so forth, even in the smallest towns, extremely well organised and directed and maintained entirely by subsidies from the Greek inhabitants without any help from the Turkish Government, which, on the contrary, strived by all means at its disposal to prevent the regular working of same.

It is in these districts of the Euxine Pontus that flourished at the eve of the war the cities of Trebizond, Samsoun (Amisos), Kerassund, Ordou (Cotyora), Sinope, Kara-Hissar (Nicopolis), Cesarea, Amassia, Uniah (Oenoé), Fatsa, Gumush-Hané (Argyroupolis), Niksar (Neocesarea), Livera, Cromni, etc., where the Greek element predominated from every point of view. A commendable emulation existed between these various communities, all of them very jealous of their institutions and actively concurring in the participation of all manifestation of intellectual life.

From the ecclesiastical point of view, the Euxine Pontus comprises six dioceses having each one an archbishop (metropolitan) at its head: Trebizond, Rodopolis (Djevizlik), Chaldia (Gumush-Hané), Neo-cesarea (Niksar), Amassia, Colonia (Nicopolis-Karahissar) and Cesarea, with a total of 1,850 churches, more than 1,400 schools, 2,650 professors, and about 60,000 scholars of both sexes.

Also in the economical domain, the Greeks of the Euxine Pontus have succeeded by their labour and intelligence in conquering the first places in spite of the many hindrances of the Turkish Government. It was they, in fact, who possessed the greatest part of the commerce of the country until the beginning of the present war.

If it had not been for the negligence of the Turkish government which only thought of collecting exhorbitant taxes by all means in its power, without the slightest care for the interests and the needs of the country, this region, abundantly supplied by nature as far as the fertility of its soil and the richness of its sub-soil are concerned, could have developed to a high degree both its agriculture and its industry.

The Government Administration did not only refuse the slightest aid to the population to this end, but it even tried to raise obstacles so as to check the impulse of the country by discouraging and annihilating all efforts and private initiative. We need only mention that the Turks have not constructed, since their coming, a single road, bridge or port, but have even allowed those which existed to disappear.

At a certain moment, at the accession of the Young Turks to power, a regeneration of the country and an improvement of the condition of its inhabitants were expected, but this was only one more illusion. The Turkish regime completely failed no matter under what liberal stamp it was presented. Thus since several years we have witnessed odious persecutions perpetrated there, and massacres *en masse* which have made the whole world shudder and which, alas, have only increased with the war! From that moment the Turks, believing in their impunity and on the other hand encouraged by the ephemeral victories of their allies, no longer limited their sinister activity. At first they inaugurated forced enlistments for painful tasks in the work battalions (Amélé-Tabourou), arbitrary requisitions and all kinds of depredation, deportations *en masse*, massacres carried out with unspeakable cruelty; the unfortunate population was spared nothing. Thus several thousand peaceful inhabitants have been exterminated.

According to information which has recently reached us, notably a letter from Monseigneur Germanos, Archbishop of Amassia and Samsoun (see pamphlet "The Turkish Atrocities in the Black Sea Territories," printed by Norbury, Natzio & Co. Ltd., Manchester and London), more than 160,000 inhabitants have been deported from the region of the Euxine Pontus. The greater part of these were not able to survive the bad treatments and sufferings they endured during their exile. Whole villages have been burnt, women and children massacred. This is what we have learnt concerning the martyrology of our compatriots.

As for the active part which the natives of the Euxine Pontus have taken, side by side with the Allies in the great

war against the common enemy, we must mention the different small corps which were constituted in the country itself and of which about thirty have been signalled to us in the region of Samsoun alone ; these have constantly harassed the Turks by guerilla warfare. There are, besides, two divisions of volunteers formed in Russia by the natives of the Euxine Pontus, under the command of General Paias, of Colonel Ananias and other officers, and which fought in the Caucasus against the Turks until the last moment, even after the Russian defection. Many of our compatriots, natives of the Euxine, who enlisted in the French Army in the beginning of the war, have fought in the ranks of the Foreign Legion and shed their blood in France, on the battlefields of Arras, St. Waast, Carrency, as well as in the Dardanelles. More than 5,000 of them enlisted in the Greek Army and have fought valiantly in Macedonia. Several thousand others, living in America, enlisted in the American Army.

Such are, Your Excellency, the claims we have the honour of submitting to your Areopagus, and which, we think, plead strongly in favour of our cause. For the above mentioned reasons and in the name of the liberal principles you have placed at the head of your programme, according to which every people, no matter how small, is equal by Right to the greatest, and can dispose of itself, we dare hope that satisfaction will be given to our legitimate aspirations.

Every other solution, besides being unjust, would create for the future a hot-bed of discontent and trouble which would continually threaten peace in the East.

We have the honour of presenting to Your Excellency the assurance of our highest consideration.

Paris, February, 1919.

The President of the National League of the Euxine Pontus,
Socrate ŒCONOMOS.

The President of the Euxine Pontus Natives' Congress,
Constantin-Jason G. CONSTANTINIDES.

Additional Note to our Memorandum submitted to the Peace Conference on 17th February, 1919.

Your Excellency,

On February 17th we had the honour to submit to you a memorandum in which we set forth our national claims.

Since then, the Armenian Delegation, when called before the Peace Conference, have formulated claims on the Euxine Pontus under the pretext that "Greece has no claims on this vilayet, which is too remote from the principal centres which she is claiming in the name of the rights of peoples," adding that "it is in perfect accord with the Hellenic Government (which has considered this question with a broad spirit of equity to which we take pleasure in paying homage) that we ask the adjunction of the Province of Trebizond to the State of Armenia . . . ."

If the Hellenic Government, however, owing to the distance which separates us from the Mother Country, have not deemed fit to include us in the programme of their direct claims, no one had any right to express an opinion regarding our country, except on the understanding that all rights should be reserved to the interested parties to express their wishes on the matter.

Therefore we, delegated by the Greek population of the Euxine Pontus, who are the people immediately interested and in whose name it is our right and our duty to speak, protest with all our might against a solution which would be contrary to our legitimate national aspirations, and also contrary to the principles held and expressed by the democratic States of the Entente, which recognise the right of each people to determine its own destiny.

The telegrams of protest which we have received from our fellow-countrymen in all parts of the world, confirm the justness of our attitude.

We are animated by the most sympathetic feelings towards our Armenian friends, who are the victims of the same

oppressor as ourselves, but only so long as their pretensions are not antagonistic to our just and legitimate claims. We are, moreover, ready to accord them economic facilities, such as the freedom of certain ports, on the plan of the facilities granted by Greece to Serbia in regard to Salonica ; but we cannot abdicate our imprescriptible rights to regions, where, on their own admission, our Armenian friends form only a small minority.

Having preserved our Greek consciousness intact through the vicissitudes of more than twenty-five centuries, this is not the time, at the moment when all oppressed peoples are called to enjoy a free and independent life, that we, who have barely escaped from a cruel foreign yoke, can agree to pass under another domination.

We ask only for our independence, and we ask for it on the ground of the right of each country to determine its own destiny.

The objection may be raised that being minors, we ought not to expect immediately to enter international life. In that case we should be ready to accept, for a certain period and until our emancipation, the protectorate of the League of Nations, with Greece as mandatory.

In conclusion, we take the liberty of repeating our earnest prayer to be heard by the Conference at the moment when the fate of our country is being decided.

Thanking you in anticipation, we have the honour of presenting to your Excellency the assurance of our deep respect.

Paris, March, 1919.

Signed—

Constantin-Jason G. CONSTANTINIDES,
President of the Euxine-Pontus Natives' Congress.

Socrate ŒCONOMOS,
President of the National League of the Euxine Pontus.

MANCHESTER:
Printed by Norbury, Natzio & Co. Ltd.